

Cold War Confusion

Washington Wonders Who's in Charge As Exploits to Harass Reds Multiply

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 12 —

The Administration has been surveying a sudden rash of private ventures in foreign policy and some of its highest officials are beginning to wonder who is in charge around here anyway.

Officially, the Government is treating each of these exploits in foreign relations and commerce as an isolated case requiring the usual diplomatic and practical attention. Privately, however, there was considerable concern here that, as often before, things were drifting alarmingly out of hand.

In the last week alone, the news has arrived that television networks are sponsoring tunnel excavations under the Berlin wall, that longshoremen are being polled to see which nation's shipping they wish to receive on American shores and Cuban exiles are boasting of raids on Cuba in which they killed not only Cuban but also Soviet citizens.

What Next? Officials Ask

What is more, the Columbia Broadcasting System, the network that called off a Berlin tunnel project at the behest of the State Department, is said now to feel normally justified but professionally outdone by the National Broadcasting Company, which plans a 30-minute spectacular with subterranean films.

Officials are wondering what bizarre enterprise the competition will produce next.

The International Longshoremen's Association is planning not only an expression of opposition by its members but a boycott of the ships of any nation that serves Cuba.

Meanwhile, the National Maritime Union, never an organization to be outbid in a labor war, has called upon the International Transport Workers Federation to organize a worldwide shipping boycott against Cuba.

Alpha 66, the Cuban exile group that has attacked British and Cuban ships and boats, is killing Russians in Cuba and setting off a diplomatic dispute between Washington and Moscow by declaring war on the Soviet bound vessels.

Some Not Displeased

Apparently, not everyone in the Federal Government is displeased by these developments. They satisfy a widespread frustration about the lack of United States initiative and, in some measure at least, meet Congressional demands that something be done to dramatize Communist activities in Berlin and Havana.

Some also say it would be bad politics at this point in an election year to move overtly against Americans who are doing their best to harass Communists.

But there is a growing feeling, especially at the State Department, that these unauthorized and, in the case of Cuban exiles, illegal activities tend to make a mockery of the delicate efforts to strike a tough but intelligence attitude in West Berlin and to annoy and isolate the Castro regime without assaulting it directly.

It is generally agreed that the new private ventures are far more serious than the almost traditional and periodic efforts of private corporations, Congress and even the military to influence and at times circumvent Washington's stated foreign policy.

The desire to protect the President's exclusive right to make an executive foreign policy lay behind the Administration's severe censorship of speeches by military men in the last two years.

The same motive inspired moves to curtail the vigorous foreign lobbying and influence over Congress' allocation of quotas for sugar purchases.

The problem is nearly as old as the country. Federalist war hawks were so satisfied with the young United States' naval victories against the French in 1799 that they became incensed over the negotiations of Dr. George Logan, a Germantown Quaker, who with Jefferson's help negotiated a private peace with Paris.

Throughout the 19th century, so-called "filibusters" or privateers operated from American bases to capture West Florida from Spain, to stir up revolt in Texas against Mexico, to take virtual control of Nicaragua.

Dr. Logan's activities led to a criminal statute that is still on the books, though it has rarely been invoked. It forbids any unauthorized American citizen to correspond or otherwise deal with a foreign government to influence that government in any disputes it may have with the United States.

Technically, therefore, James Donovan, the New York lawyer who has been negotiating with the Castro Government for the release of 1,113 Cuban prisoners without any acknowledged authorization from Washington, may be acting in violation of the Logan Act of 1796.

But the Government's cooperation with, if not sponsorship of, the Donovan negotiations has been tacitly admitted here, whereas the more provocative raids, boycotts and Berlin forays run the risk of physically as well as diplomatically embarrassing incidents.